

City of Springfield

Animal Issues Task Force

Recommendation # 2

Programs

Goal: The Animal Issues Task Force recommends that City Council consider implementing additional programs that will prove beneficial to our community.

Purpose: The programs outlined below will reduce intake at the pound, lower Animal Control costs, and increase donations and public support.

Rationale: There are numerous programs that are being utilized across the country that will benefit our community. To effectively address responsible pet ownership, a strong mix of legislation, advocacy and education is needed. The programs outlined below can be an important addition to addressing needs in the community.

- ***Establish Mandatory Dog Licensure/Voluntary Cat Licensure***—A licensure program could be administered by an external company such as PetData, which requires no City staff. A licensure program could yield a number of valuable benefits to pets, their owners and the City. The purpose of licensing is to decrease intake, increase return-to-owner rates, increase rabies vaccination compliance, and incentivize owners to spay and neuter their pets. Licensing fees would be differential—that is, pet owners whose pets are not spayed or neutered would pay a considerably higher fee. Benefits of licensing could include:
 - Free Ride Home program-Animal Control would attempt to provide a free ride home to currently licensed animals
 - Discounts on spay/neuter procedures, veterinary services, and/or local retailers
 - Memberships to Cruse Dog Park
- ***Create a Friends-of-the-Pound Group for Fundraising and Advocacy*** – Animal Control should develop a Friends-of-the-Pound group modeled after Friends-of-the-Zoo. This group currently raises one-third of the annual budget for Dickerson Park Zoo. A director’s position should be initially funded by the City, with the understanding that the funding would be reduced yearly for the next three years, at which point the position would be self-funded. A strong, well-trained volunteer presence could partially run the following programs:
 - ***On-Site Adoption***—With a new facility in place providing adequate space, the Health Department should establish a program to provide direct adoption of

dogs and cats to private individuals on-site at the shelter, as well as mobile locations. This program has the potential to be run by one of our current rescue partners with the expertise of preparing animals for adoptive homes.

- **Community Education**—We encourage the establishment of an ongoing community education program. A public awareness campaign is badly needed to address those issues most likely to result in homeless animals. For example, most people are not aware of the young age at which a puppy or kitten can be safely spayed or neutered, resulting in a large number of accidental litters and increasing shelter intake.
 - **Community Cat Education**—Unowned, outdoor cats are such a persistent problem in Springfield that a special education program for this issue should be developed.
- **Volunteer Public-Relations Committee**—A public relations committee could focus on education efforts, outreach, adoptable pets, needs of the shelter, or any other issue deemed important. This function could be part of the mission of the proposed ongoing Animal Issues Input Group.
- **Pet Foster Home Placement Program** – Animal Control should develop and support a pet foster home placement program to ensure that all adoptable animals are rescued from the shelter.
- **Pet-Friendly Rental Housing List**—A pet-friendly rental housing list should be compiled and posted on the Health Department website. Since many people surrender pets because of housing restrictions, this service would help them to find housing that accepts pets, keeping more animals out of the shelter system.
- **Help Desk program**—A Help Desk can resolve many of the situations causing people to bring their pets to shelters, preventing animals from entering the shelter system and saving the City money in the process. Services may include information and moral support. Referrals would be made for behavior modification, training, spay/neuter services, Trap Neuter Return, veterinary care, or pet food.
- **Barn Cat Adoption Program**—A Barn Cat Adoption Program can offer a new chance at life for feral cats who cannot be returned to their original home.
- **Continue Partnership with Rescues** – Animal Control should continue to partner with more than fifty existing rescue groups such as C.A.R.E. and Halfway Home. Existing licensed and approved rescue agency partners in good standing should be listed on the Springfield-Greene County Health Department’s website.
- **Continue Partnership with SAAFhouse** – SAAFhouse is a critical piece of the local pet population puzzle. The provision of low-cost spay/neuter surgeries will continue to

provide a positive impact on the local pet population by preventing unintentional litters of puppies and kittens.

- ***Strengthen Partnership with Humane Society of Southwest Missouri***—Seek opportunities for more collaboration between the Humane Society and Animal Control.
- ***Continue to Facilitate Lost-and-Found Programs*** – Continue to take part in, promote and/or help facilitate existing lost-and-found animal programs in the community.
- ***Establish Community Advisory Meetings***—Periodic meetings could be held in which volunteers, rescuers, and concerned citizens come together to give feedback, ask questions, discuss topics of interest, and make recommendations. These meetings would give insight into the needs of the community, provide creative suggestions, and gain public support. This function could be part of the mission of the proposed ongoing Animal Issues Input Group.